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SIPDIS

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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU - AMB COURVILLE
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SUBJECT: COMOROS' SAMBI POSTPONES ANJOUAN'S ELECTION

REF: ANTANANARIVO 566 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Union of the Comoros President Ahmed Abdallah Sambi postponed Anjouan's island election to June 17, contrary to international pressure. Deposed Anjouan island president Bacar continues his "end-game" threatening to hold elections anyway. Votes in Grand Comore and Moheli will go as scheduled; all three run-offs, if needed, will be held June 24. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) President Sambi officially decided June 7 that the island president election in Anjouan would be postponed until June 17 given former Anjouan president Bacar has repeatedly blocked a free and transparent process (reftels). A public announcement is expected this evening, but senior GOC contacts confirm the decision is final. Island president elections on Grand Comore and Moheli will go ahead as planned June 10; all three second round run-offs, if needed, will be June 24. Comoran civic leaders in Anjouan support the delay, noting no candidate but Bacar has been able to campaign. At present Anjouan is calm, the airport is open and secured by AU forces.

¶3. (SBU) For purely logistical reasons, most of the international community tried to pressure President Sambi to stick to June 10. Having traveled far and wide, many at the eleventh hour, they are not keen to wait a week. The Embassy has three staff in Grand Comore to monitor the election there; but will defer travel by other observers until June 17 in light of the postponement. For his part, Bacar insists he will hold an election on June 10 no matter what - a difficult threat to carry out if reports are true that ballots remain in Grand Comore. Elections organization in Grand Comore and Moheli are proceeding smoothly.

¶4. (SBU) AU Envoy Francisco Madeira led a delegation to Anjouan June 7 for negotiations with Bacar. Madeira's goal was to obtain some concessions from Bacar to convince Sambi to stick to June 10; but he was too late. Post awaits a read-out of what else was discussed. Another flight carrying AU observers and equipment was also allowed to land in Anjouan June 7, bringing the total force there to over 100.

¶5. (U) The Embassy will distribute an updated Warden Message for the Comoros as soon as it is cleared at the Department.

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